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Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by The Hunger Project, International Planned Parenthood Federation, Let's Breakthrough, Inc., Pan Pacific and South East Asia Women's Association, Rutgers, Sonke Gender Justice Network and Unchained At Last Inc, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Statement

Breakthrough along with six organisations welcome the theme of the 63rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women "Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls."

While the Commission is focusing on social protection systems and access to public services, we wish to highlight that this focus is incomplete without making them effective and efficient. Impact of having improved response mechanisms can be felt when women and girls access services and get timely, sensitive response and support. One area where we see impact of weak response mechanisms are cases of early/child marriage.

A recent UNICEF report shows, more than 650 million women and girls were married before 18 years. 21 per cent of women between 20-24 years (Ending Child Marriage: Progress and prospects, UNICEF, 2014) worldwide were child brides. While early marriage is most prevalent in low and middle-income countries, it also happens in high-income countries.

While global early/child marriage rates are falling, progress has been uneven. Because of population growth in regions where early marriage is prevalent, rate of decline is slow and early marriages are projected to increase by 2030. While sub-Saharan Africa has highest rates of early marriage, South Asia has largest numbers of child brides. If there's no reduction, 1.2 billion women alive in 2050 will have married during childhood. (Ending Child Marriage: Progress and prospects, UNICEF, 2014)

Ending child marriage and early child-bearing could reduce fertility and lower population by one tenth. Analysis suggests that globally, by 2030, gains in well-being from lower population growth could reach more than USD500 billion annually. (Economic impacts of child marriage: global synthesis report. World Bank)

For children of young mothers, there are reduced risks of death or stunting by age five. Globally, benefits of lower under-five mortality and malnutrition could reach more than $90 billion annually by 2030. (Economic impacts of child marriage: global synthesis report. World Bank)

Another benefit of ending child marriage is increase in women's earnings. Due to impact of child marriage, women who marry as children have 9 per cent lower earnings. (Educating Girls, Ending Child Marriage, World Bank Report 2017)

During our work on early/child marriage for last 7 years, we observed that girls want to access and enjoy rights, but institutional, social and familial structures prevent them. In India we have laws, policies and services to prevent early marriage and support girls in accessing rights. The need to work on improving response mechanisms and services is imperative.

The first barrier to services and schemes, especially Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights related, is difficulty in access. Women's and girls' lack of sexual and reproductive agency shows in high levels of maternal mortality and morbidity, HIV/AIDS, unintended pregnancy, unmet contraceptive needs, challenges in accessing safe abortion and post-abortion care (World Bank 2014). Maternal mortality is a leading cause of death for 15-19-year-old girls (Health for World's Adolescents: A second chance in the second decade. WHO 2014). Half the abortions worldwide are unsafe, and nearly all unsafe abortions (98 per cent) occur in developing countries. Complications from unsafe abortions account for estimated 13 per cent of maternal deaths (GutInstitute, 2012, Facts on Induced Abortion Worldwide). An estimated

225 million women in developing countries have unmet contraceptive needs, either because services are unavailable or inaccessible (Adding It Up: Costs and Benefits of Investing in Sexual Reproductive Health, 2014).

While national strategies around Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health exist, they are not implemented or weakly implemented. According to WHO, one key factor is lack of comfort in dealing with sensitive issues, and biases from attitudes and values. These are barriers in preventing evidence-based recommendations from shaping policies, and in translating policies into action. Another is lack of capacity in planning, implementing and monitoring activities, especially those in authority positions at sub-national levels. When national Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health strategies are not implemented effectively, young people cannot obtain sexuality and reproductive health education and services.

Another barrier is accessing education services. A 2012 UNFPA study states girls from poor families are three times more likely to marry before 18 years (UNFPA, 2012. Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage.). Limited schemes promoting girls' education after 14 years, limited access to education, prioritisation of boys' education contribute to perpetuate the practice. Educated women are likely to take preventive actions and seek medical services for themselves and their children (UNFPA, 2012. Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage.). Vocational training and employment opportunities for women are limited, girls see marriage as the only option. Unsafe and unsupportive work spaces make it difficult for women to continue working.

The final challenge is combatting unequal and harmful gender norms. There are hardly support system girls can approach to raise voices against violence. They are afraid to report fearing stigmatisation, and/or their close proximity to the abuser; they feel unable to overcome institutional barriers. Girls and their families find it difficult to protest and get girls married early to protect them. Despite presence of child marriage laws, there are no formally reported incidences in India.

The continued practice of early marriage undermines efforts to improve girls' lives and end cycle of violence which results when girls/women don't have access to support mechanisms.

To improve service provision and response mechanism we need the following groups to work on:

1. **Government and duty Bearers**

   a. Health & Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

   i. Transparency in budgeting & functioning of social protection schemes and services

   ii. Improve access to health services for adolescent girls, reaching marginalised communities

   iii. Increased budgetary allocations for effective implementation of health services.

   iv. Access to comprehensive sexuality education

   b. Education

   i. Policy change: Increase number of years of compulsory education from 8 to 12

   ii. Making sure all girls are in school till 18 years

   iii. Improving quality of education in government schools

iv. Creating task force across departments to track child marriage

c. Productivity

i. Include gender rights training in skill training institutes

d. Combating unequal gender norms

i. Stop schemes for giving money to marry off girls at 18

ii. Raising legal-age of marriage of girls

iii. Making it possible for women to own property

iv. Sensitising duty bearers and law enforcers while responding to cases of violence or against women and girls

v. Strengthening accountability and monitoring mechanisms of service providing agencies and institutions

vi. Effective implementation of laws, schemes, policies and services and reaching women and girls from marginalised communities.

2. Multi-Lateral agencies

a. Health & Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

i. Bringing evidence and best practices in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights to combat early marriage and inform programmes and schemes

b. Education

i. Advocacy with governments to make school education compulsory for 12 years for girls

c. Productivity

i. Advocating with governments for more employability skills and opportunities for women especially looking at the future of work

ii. Bringing evidence-based gender lens to highlight how workspaces can be made women friendly

d. Combating unequal harmful gender norms

i. Advocacy with governments for raising the legal age of marriage and plugging loopholes in law.

3. Non-governmental organizations and Implementing agencies

a. Health

i. Engaging in comprehensive sexuality education for adolescents

ii. Raising demand for health services to adolescents

iii. Bringing voice of girls and women to planning and implementation process

b. Education

i. Putting community level systems to combat drop-outs

c. Productivity

i. Removing barriers to female participation in workforce

ii. Raising, combating issues on sexual harassment in public spaces

d. Combating unequal and harmful gender norms

i. Changing narrative around marriage: Marriage as a choice, Not compulsion

ii. Promoting right to choice

iii. Mass campaigns in disseminating information about service provision

Girls are powerful agents of socioeconomic change. Data shows when girls complete secondary education, access employment and health services, they're healthier, participate in formal labour market, marry later, have fewer children and provide better healthcare and education for next generation. But harmful gender norms that forbid girls from attending schools or accessing services must be addressed and norms around marriage must be challenged.

We, the undersigned, call on the international community to send a strong message that it's time to promote sensitive and timely social protections, strengthen law enforcement to end the human-rights abuse that is early marriage. Everywhere.

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Care International, International Center for Research on Women, International Rescue Committee, Inc., Overseas Development Institute, Pathfinder International, Plan International (UK), Save the Children International, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, and World Vision International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Statement

We, Care International, the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Pathfinder International, Plan International UK, Save the Children International, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), and WorldVision UK, all ECOSOC accredited organisations call on Member States, the UN and Civil Society Organisations to focus on the specific needs of adolescent girls and boys in both rural and urban settings.

Adolescence is a critical time for young people to obtain knowledge and skills, and to prepare for a healthy and empowered adulthood. In adolescence, however, gendered social norms become increasingly influential, resulting in girls facing increasing violence, discrimination and restrictions on their mobility, behaviours and access to information and services.

Tackling the vulnerabilities adolescents face is a necessary part of Leave(ing) No One Behind. Adolescents, including those with disabilities, from ethnic minorities, displaced and refugee communities, married girls, child mothers, adolescents living in informal settlements, slums or remote rural locales — need tailored solutions to the challenges they face.

Through the research carried out by the Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) consortium, to which we all belong, we know that interventions which systematically address adolescents' unique needs and are designed with adolescents can help accelerate progress against the effects of poverty, inequality and discrimination.

We call on you, Member States, UN and CSOs to adopt a holistic rights-based whole community, whole adolescent approach and join our efforts to:

1. Invest in Education and Learning, especially access, quality, and secondary school transitions and completion.

2. Protect adolescents' bodily integrity and freedom from violence, including combatting child, early and forced marriage, harmful traditional practices, sexual violence, exploitation and abuse.

3. Improve all domains of adolescent health, including nutrition and access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services.

4. Promote adolescent psychosocial well-being and resilience, including addressing mental health needs.

5. Foster adolescents' voice and agency to meaningfully participate in household, school and community decisions.

6. Invest in the foundations of adolescent empowerment including financial literacy, technical and vocational skills, and age-appropriate access to credit.

We remind you that the success of the 2030 SDGs depends on how 1.2 billion adolescents, aged 10–19, navigate this crucial life stage, and call on you to:

- invest in the design and implementation of evidence-informed and scalable adolescent programming and policies that speak to contextualised needs, prioritizing meaningful engagement and partnerships with adolescents themselves; and
- collect sex, age and disability disaggregated data, and ensure programmes and policies are monitored, evaluated and improved on the basis of evidence, contributing to a more robust global evidence base and more effective future interventions.

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Afri-health Optonet Association, Generation Initiative for Women and Youth Network, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Vision GRAM-International and Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (YCSRR), non-governmental organizations in consultative with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Please recycle

Statement

The Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (YCSRR) applaud the Commission's focus on the social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in its upcoming session. YCSRR acknowledges that social protection is a human right as stipulated under Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

With the priority theme of the 63rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, we urge the Commission to recognize that denying young women and adolescent girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights is a form of discrimination and human rights violation under social protection systems. Accordingly, we urge the Commission to prioritize the pressing and emerging issues that are impeding the full realization of women and girls' potential, especially rural young women's and adolescent girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights around the world and are at the brink of being silenced in the international community. One such issue is that of our right to access Comprehensive Abortion Care.

Taking an intersectional and human rights-based approach to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity. We call for the Commission's renewed commitment and solidarity with women, girls and other marginalized groups who face perpetuating systems of inequality, oppression and violence. The challenges to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity differ according to a variety of characteristics, of which the rural/urban divide and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual (LGBTQIA+) can be particularly stark. There is a human rights imperative to address this inequality.

We note that within vulnerable populations, discrimination based on other characteristics also affects the achievement of human rights, limiting opportunity for marginalised groups and suppressing gender equality. These include discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, race, indigeneity, socioeconomics and physical ability. These intersecting factors must also be taken into account.

This statement focuses on social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure in the context of sexual and reproductive health and rights of all, especially young people, in particular girls, young women and LGBTQIA+ youth (referred to in this statement by the term 'women and girls in all their diversity').

Sexual and reproductive health and rights are key to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity as recognised in United Nations documents like the Sustainable Development Goals and Beijing Platform for Action.

YCSRR believes that the following require priority measures for action to enable women and girls in all their diversity to achieve gender equality and empowerment on the social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure:

Ensuring the right to access safe and affordable abortion services as an essential component of social protection system and a comprehensive and integrated package of public health services.

A recent WHO report on unsafe abortion shows that legal restrictions on abortions do not reduce the number of abortions, but rather increase the risks of maternal mortality and morbidity due to unsafe abortions carried out by unskilled attendants, this is particularly concerning in rural areas where most of the time, they

don't have access to quality healthcare services. The consequences of such abortions are often appalling for adolescent girls and young women given the legal, social and cultural barriers and the abortion-related stigma that limits their access to quality sexual and reproductive health services.

According to the 2011 WHO report, about 2.5 million adolescents have unsafe abortions each year, often with complications more serious than those experienced by older women. About 13 per cent of all maternal deaths annually are due to unsafe abortions, 14 per cent of all unsafe abortions in low-and middle-income countries are among girls aged 15-19. Due to the legal restrictions on abortion coupled with the stigma and shame associated with it, many such cases go undocumented -leaving women with lifelong risks and complications. However, in WHO's 2012 'Safe Abortion: technical and policy guidance for health systems', when young women and adolescent girls' right to sexual and reproductive health is fulfilled, including access to a range of modern contraceptives, abortion prevalence rates are lower.

We urge governments and stakeholders to protect women's sexual and reproductive rights, by including safe abortion as an essential intervention to realize the right to health, life and social protection. Such rights are fundamental to achieve Sustainable Development Goal three.

Unpaid Care and Domestic Work

Governments often do not recognize the value of unpaid care and domestic work. This should be recognized through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.

Governments should develop policies and programmes which reduce the unpaid work burden by providing improved access to infrastructure facilities including time and labour-saving technologies.

Women, girls and LGBTQIA+ in Poverty

There has been a link with higher percentage of poverty for marginalized groups. YCSRR is committed to eliminating inequalities, including eradicating poverty by 2030. We believe that all people must enjoy a basic standard of living, including through social protection systems.

We should devote resources to developing rural areas and sustainable agriculture and fisheries, supporting smallholder farmers, especially women farmers, herders and fishers in least developed countries. Governments should implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and marginalized.

Moreover, governments should develop policies/ programmes which provide underprivileged groups with financial, employment, and land security, as well as a voice in decision-making forums, encouraging more female leadership in organisations pertaining to food and agriculture through mentoring opportunities and training.

Life Cycle Approach in Social Protection

Governments should adopt a life cycle approach in social protection. Address vulnerabilities and marginalized position associated with life stages such as motherhood, infancy, school age, disability, sickness. They are universalistic rather than limited to the poor which will reduce exclusion. Moreover, the rights based rather than discretionary so that governments could be held accountable. They are

customised and at the same time, showing to be fiscally sustainable even in low-income countries over the longer run.

Education

We urge governments to allocate specific budgets and more funds from GDP to social protection programs and not on its central provident fund. They should work with local partners to improve facilities to provide women and girls living in rural areas education that is accessible, of the highest standards and include gender appropriate and sensitive sanitation facilities and safe environments.

HIV and AIDS

Women and girls in all their diversity face heightened discrimination, victimisation and social isolation. They have fewer supportive resources because of limited mobility, access to education and social support and financial resources. They have reduced access to providers who are comfortable with, or have accurate non-judgemental knowledge about, the treatment and services they need. This can expose them to harmful discrimination and potential abuse, putting their health at risk. Governments should develop policies that will involve and mention LGBTQIA+ people in the social protection policies.

Conclusion

The exclusion of women and girls in all their diversity in social protection systems exists. Feminisation of inequality persists, and the eradication of these inequalities in all its forms and dimensions, is an indispensable requirement for women's social security, economic empowerment and sustainable development. We stress the mutually reinforcing links between the achievement of gender equality, the empowerment of all women and girls and the presence of a rights-based social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure. We realise that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the global goals and targets. We also stress the need to ensure an adequate standard of living for women, girls and LGBTQIA+ throughout the life cycle, including through social protection systems.

We stress the importance of taking targeted measures to eradicate inequalities in all its forms and dimensions, and of implementing nationally appropriate systems and measures for all, including social protection floors, based on national priorities, paying particular attention to women, children, LGBTQIA+, indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities, especially if they are living in a rural area.

All those policies and programmes involving social protection need a clear gendered budget to realise those goals with transparent and ethical monitoring.

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Statement submitted by European Union of Women, Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas (FAWCO), Graduate Women International (GWI), International Alliance of Women, International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL), International Council of Women, International Federation for Home Economics, International Federation on Ageing, Les Amis du Projet Imagine, Make Mothers Matter, Mothers Legacy Project, Pax Romana, Servas International, Socialist International Women, Soroptimist International, Verein zur Forderung der Volkerverstandigung, Widows for Peace through Democracy, Women's International Zionist Organization, World Union for Progressive Judaism and Zonta International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

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Please recycle

Statement

The Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas, and the undersigned non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) who are members of the Non-governmental Committees on the Status of Women (Vienna and Geneva), present the following statement to the members and observers of the 63rd United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

Social protection is a key human rights-based strategy for eradicating poverty and increasing equality and social justice to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that over 70 per cent of the world's population, more than five billion people, mostly women, are not covered by comprehensive social security systems. Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts that "every member of society has the right to social security." Sustainable Development Goal One, "end poverty in all its forms everywhere," calls for nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all by 2030. The ILO's Social Protection Floors Recommendation (2012) called for governments to establish social protections for all in need, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976) committed its parties to work toward granting an adequate standard of living.

Gender-sensitive social protection measures require the recognition of women's and girls' needs and priorities, as well as their time and energy constraints. The links between accessible quality public services, education, health systems and infrastructure and the empowerment of women and girls are clear, and essential for achieving Sustainable Development Goal #5, "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls." Social protection systems, public services and infrastructure programs should be based on thorough needs assessments which recognize the variety of women's roles.

Women and girls do a disproportionate share of unpaid and low-paid work, and experience time poverty. This restricts their access to education and decent work, negatively impacts their health and well-being, limits their opportunities and undervalues their contributions. Access to infrastructure and public services benefits women and girls by decreasing the burdens of unpaid and low paid work, enabling them to devote more time to education and income-generating activities, and improve their livelihoods, which in turn will benefit families and communities. Infrastructure investments designed to loosen traditional gender roles and social norms accelerate women's economic empowerment.

Unconditional universal social protection would avoid stigmatization, promote inclusion and equality, and reduce gender stereotypes. Economic empowerment for women and girls will require transformations in the systemic policies and stereotypes which disadvantage women in the family, community and labour market: unpaid and underpaid work and the gender pay gap, and the lack of income security for older women and widows.

The provision of public services should never be considered an opportunity for profit-making. Empowered educated citizens and responsible governments — not market systems -- should create inclusive societies based on rules to safeguard human liberty, equality and dignity.

Women create, nurture and sustain communities and maintain ecological systems. Gender-sensitive social protection systems, public services and infrastructure programs will bring community networks, connect women with new

opportunities, and strengthen social inclusion and the collective action necessary to achieve the ambitious and inclusive goals of the 2030 Agenda.

The undersigned members of the non-governmental organization Committee on the Status of Women Vienna submit the following recommendations for consideration by the members and observers of the 63rd Commission on the Status of Women, and call upon Member States to:

Provide unconditional, universal social protection to all in all stages of the life cycle, and implement policy frameworks to meet basic needs for all, especially migrant and refugee women and girls, people with disabilities, the elderly, and widows;

Adopt policies to narrow gender pay gaps, enhance women's access to income and pensions, and provide family allowances for children;

Provide comprehensive health services which address gender-specific risks and needs, including sexual and reproductive health services for girls and women, child and maternity services, mental health services, and care for survivors of gender-based violence;

Involve women and women's organizations in the definition of essential services for priority public funding, and support women's participation in infrastructure development planning and decision-making;

Analyse women's specific needs and constraints, and address these through gender-sensitive infrastructure programs and policies;

Design innovative gender-inclusive infrastructure projects to ensure women's security in all public spaces and on public transportation;

Mitigate the environmental impacts of infrastructure developments including roads, water, transport;

Involve women and women's organizations in participatory monitoring mechanisms such as social audits to improve the design and delivery of gender-responsive programs;

Increase support for women's non-governmental organizations and involve civil society, especially women and women's organizations in the design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of social protection, public services and infrastructure developments.

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Statement submitted by Mothers Pride and Development Initiative, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Please recycle

Statement

Reducing Gender Inequality and Enhancing Women Empowerment for Development in Nigeria around the world

Without mixing words, women's participation in development initiatives has not been encouraging and it does not always guarantee their empowerment, health and welfare in a male dominated society like Nigeria.

In Nigeria, it is observed that womanhood is reduced to a mere infidel and a second-class citizen; hence, there is the commonality of general belief system that the best place for women is in the kitchen. This trend has brought about tremendous misrepresentation of women right at the level of the family down to the circular society.

A few decades back, women in African politics were not much more than pretty faces, as they were judged by their looks and not by what they had to say. But things have changed nowadays. African women that gained political power definitely know what to do with it. Nigerian women persevered and have got to the point where they can be on the same political level as men. Most of male leaders are attributed to different corruption and malpractices, Nevertheless, women in politics are more than a pretty face. There are examples of women making strides in politics and in financial institutions and advancing the rights of women and youth. The #BRINGBACKOURGIRLS# campaign is another example where women have been influential. Women have also been influential and effective in regaining the nobility and integrity of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control in Nigeria by eradicating counterfeit drugs and unsafe foods in Nigeria.

Basically, gender inequality is the development process where resources are distributed between male and female segment of the population in such manner that one is favoured at the expense of the other. Consequently, this results to income inequality within the society. The income inequality leads to other inequalities in the economy especially in the area of human capital development (Education and Health).

In Nigeria, resources are distributed unequally against the female gender due to societal norms and stereotypes, for example gender inequality within the overall society and across all sector show the wide disparities between women and men which in turn contributes to uneven development and feminization of poverty. Below are some of the factors that indicate inequalities in Nigeria:

- On Poverty level; 70 per cent of people with poverty, women are 65 per cent
- In participation in workforce; 76 per cent of Federal civil services workers are men while women are 24 per cent.
- Income and purchasing power; research have it that men have USD 1,495 while the women have USD 614.
- In participation in decision making process; 94.5 per cent men and 5.5 per cent are women in the National Assembly 469 men and just 26 are women. This is quite unfair.

After critical look in the inclusive systematic evaluation for gender equality, environments and marginalized voices of the women cum recommendations of the expert group meeting on building sustainable and resilient societies through the gender responsive implementation of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, it is moral and ethical imperative. Plan to achieve a just and sustainable future cannot ignore the rights, dignity and capability of half the world's population. To be effective, policy actions for sustainability must redress the disproportionate impacts on women

and girls of economic, social and environmental shocks, pain and stress. Women has the potential to improve resource productivity, enhance ecosystem conversion and sustainable use of natural resources, and create more sustainable low carbon food, energy, water and health systems. Failure to capitalize on the aforementioned would be a missed opportunity.

At Mothers Pride and Development Initiative, we believe in seeking the peace of the stomach as seeking the peace of the nation, we give life a meaning by putting smiles on the faces of our women, widows and the youths through our quarterly empowerment programs, free skill acquisition and adult literacy services, advocate and agitate for the rights of women and widows entitlements. We also engage our women in social economy activities by grouping them into different cooperative society to encourage their prudence habit and serve as evaluation measure for their growths. We desire to enhance rapid development in our society and to give a meaningful support to the widows. "Empowering a woman, is developing the nation." A better Nigeria is a great Africa, and it will make a better global habitat for all.

Resolutions taken are that various programs undertaken by the government in Nigeria, Africa and the world should be scale up to develop the women. Stakeholders should monitor the implementation of reforms in that direction to ensure equitable distribution of resources and records. That, all political stakeholders at all level should make it a norm of larger portion of women participation in leadership roles like 40 per cent involvement across all sector. Adequate advocacy campaign and sensitization on rights of women both in rural and urban areas. Give all women fair hearing in all issues at all level regardless of tribe, traditional and religious differences.

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Statement submitted by Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

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Statement

The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America is a Christian denomination of two million members in more than 15 countries and a province of the Anglican Communion.

As Christians, we believe that God created all humans equally, in God's image. We believe that God created us capable of living lives worthy of dignity, blessed with adequate resources and to be in loving, liberating and life-giving relationship with God, one another and God's creation. Our scriptures, Jesus' Way of Love and our Baptismal Covenant call us to love one another as Christ has loved us, and to seek and serve Christ in all persons, regardless of gender.

These Christian values are the reason our Church has officially affirmed United Nations international agreements and conventions calling for just and equal treatment of women and girls. The Episcopal Church also supports women and girls through its mission, programs, resolutions of its governing body, General Convention, and advocacy. Episcopal congregations, dioceses, schools, agencies, networks and programs provide and deliver social protection and public services resources to women and girls.

This year's priority theme stresses that women and girls need adequate social protections and public services, coupled by sustainable gender-responsive infrastructure and development, to realize fully their empowerment. Still, many women and girls find that gender-specific gaps, inequalities or discrimination impede their progress.

Thus, we call upon member states, the United Nations and civil society to overcome these impediments:

Implement gender-responsive solutions to gaps in social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure

In social protections, public services and sustainable infrastructure, there are gender gaps in resources, policies and infrastructure that negatively impact women and girls, their families and communities.

Social protections, provided by governments, offset hardship and the risk of poverty in times of vulnerability due to illness, disability, incapacity to work, parental leave, unemployment, retirement and old age. However, women are not always able to access these benefits equally to men. Women are less likely to have pensions or savings due to their elevated levels of informal, part time, or unpaid but essential domestic work and care at home, all of which are productive activities that nevertheless pay less than full-time work and do not give access to pensions. They may need access to child care and family support services, as well.

Public services, by contrast, are resources that governments provide directly or indirectly to all, such as protective security services, education, health care, water, sanitation, electricity. Women and girls may find these resources difficult to access, expensive, insufficient or non-existent, or risky to use. This applies especially in education and health care. Girls may not receive an education as readily as boys in societies where girls must leave school early to marry, work or care for families and the home, reducing their prospects for higher education, employment and economic well-being. Girls may experience harassment while walking to school or in schools. Similarly, health care may be more limited for women and girls, in countries that do not offer universal health care or where social norms may forbid reproductive and sexual health care and family planning services. Health care may also be inadequate due to lack of investment or unequally financed.

Social protections and public services require socially, economically and environmentally sustainable and gender-aware infrastructure. Inadequate, inaccessible or unsustainable infrastructure hampers women's equal physical and digital access to housing, water, sanitation, health care, education and more. Market access, land tenure and property ownership rights must be extended to women. Accessibility must be guaranteed for women and girls with disabilities and transgender persons. Sustainable infrastructure must be responsive to climate change and powered by affordable clean energy.

We urge member states, United Nations entities and civil society to:

- extend or create viable social security systems where these do not exist;
- provide family and social protections, including paid parental leave, affordable and quality child care, pre-school and family support services, and support for single-family households;
- ensure equal access to quality health care, including maternal and infant health, sexual and reproductive health, family planning, and disease prevention;
- adopt awareness campaigns and policies prioritizing education for girls and offer alternative training pathways for women and girls;
- align national laws and policies so that women can purchase and inherit land, property and businesses;
- develop sustainable infrastructure in areas not currently covered, including roads, bridges, transportation, pipelines, culturally appropriate water and sanitation facilities and digital connectivity;
- eradicate harmful environmental practices, reduce carbon emissions, invest in and promote clean energy sources.

Prioritize Marginalized Groups of Women and Girls in Extending Social Protections, Public Services and Sustainable Infrastructure

As followers of Jesus, Episcopalians are called to lift up those who have been marginalized or left behind. This aligns with "Leave No One Behind" and "reach the furthest behind first", principles of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, which our Church affirmed in 2016.

Reaching the furthest behind first means prioritizing public services, social protections and sustainable infrastructure for particular groups. These include rural women; indigenous women ; women with disabilities ; immigrant women; women from minority groups based on ethnicity, race, caste, descent , language, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity/expression ; migrants, refugees, undocumented workers and stateless women; enslaved, trafficked or incarcerated women; unemployed women; women whose work is considered socially immoral, illegal or unacceptable; older women; and women heads of households. These groups' needs trail broader resource *allocation and programming* and consequently, they are disproportionately disadvantaged, marginalized, discriminated against, displaced and excluded. The intersectionality of race, class, ethnicity and gender exacerbate these challenges. Resources must be more readily accessible, inclusive, adequate and affordable to them.

We urge member states, United Nations entities and civil society to:

- prioritize financing, resource allocation and provision of social protections, public services and sustainable infrastructure for these marginalized groups;

- promote awareness campaigns informing these groups and the public of their rights and opportunities and the political and socio-economic actions to support them;
- provide contextually appropriate education, health care, child care and social support services so they may take advantage of these opportunities.

Promote Gender Equality Education and Practices and Eradicate Gender-Based Violence

In 2015, our Church's General Convention commended "giving priority to the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women, including transgender individuals". This requires not only correcting social, political and economic inequalities, but identifying the root causes of gender discrimination, including traditional understandings of gender roles, religious beliefs, sexism, machismo and patriarchy. New values must be taught through culturally contextualized gender equality education for all, including men and boys.

A serious, persistent and pernicious consequence of gender discrimination is gender-based violence, including but not limited to intimate partner violence, physical assault, rape, psychological abuse, harassment, bullying, denigrating language and human trafficking. The #MeToo movement since 2017 demonstrated its depth and breadth. In 2015, our Church's General Convention noted it "deeply regret[ted] the lack of progress in stemming the global pandemic of violence against women" and requested that its clergy and congregations "speak out...to transform the unjust silence of society in the face of this widespread practice of violence".

We urge member states, United Nations entities and civil society to:

- promote gender equality education for all, including men and boys, examining indicators, root causes of inequalities and the positive effects of gender equality;
- expand awareness campaigns and education about gender-based violence and its prevention;
- promote women's participation in decision-making, political leadership and governance locally, regionally, nationally and internationally;
- eradicate early, child and forced marriage;
- universally ratify and implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and its Optional Protocol.

Women and girls deserve full support in accessing social protections, public services and sustainable infrastructure. We encourage member states, United Nations entities and civil society to pursue these priorities and to uphold the values, principles, legislation and programs for gender equality and justice, which benefit all.

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Statement submitted by Women's Education and Culture Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Statement

Women's Education and Culture Foundation (HEKVA), as a local and national non-governmental organization for the empowerment of socio-economically disadvantaged community-especially women and girls, welcomes the 63rd Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations.

We promote self-sufficiency and social integration; enhance capacity to manage economic and social risks of socio-economically disadvantaged women for the advancement of family, children, youth and consequently the society in general. For this purpose, we support the socio-economically disadvantaged communities in-kind and in-cash, perform educational, social and cultural activities and conduct national-international projects for women and youth development since 1988.

Women's Education and Culture Foundation is aware of the importance of unity in all levels of society, especially among non-governmental organisations and international non-governmental organization. With this understanding, we work in cooperation with European Voluntary Service, the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policies' General Directorate, the Governorship of Istanbul 'Fight Against Drugs and Addiction' Coordination, Turkey's Non-governmental organisations Child and Youth Platform, Turkey's Non-governmental organisations Turkey Family Platform etc. We also become members of or partner with International Organizations and Foundations to have a global perspective and understanding of the problems as well as a united power to take action. Women's Education and Culture Foundation is amongst the first non-governmental organisations from Turkey to have a Special Consultative Status at ECOSOC (since 2009).

Women's Education and Culture Foundation has the mission to set an example to be a part of the solution. Status of Syrian refugees has been a major issue in Turkey for the recent years. As we see in the Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management 2018 numbers, "Turkey is... home to the largest refugee population in the world; over 3.1 million Syrians live under temporary protection, almost half of whom (nearly 1.4 million) are children." The Turkish Government has provided all types of social protection and security services to these refugees. Many subject-specific, local, national and international branches of non-governmental organisations in Turkey take an active role in the field to share this burden. As a non-governmental organisation in a developing country, Women's Education and Culture Foundation prioritizes social protection and has provided vocational courses, certificate programs, Turkish Language Courses for Non-Turkish Citizens, Handicraft Workshops, gifts for children; included women in voluntary work to help their social integration; served them food in the Soup Kitchen. Some of the Syrian women showed such a success in learning Turkish, that they provided translation services for the women that do not know Turkish.

Women's Education and Culture Foundation conducted an awareness project titled "You Have Got a Message!" under the auspices of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, on the 62nd Commission of the Status of Women. The aim of the event was to create awareness of the fact that refugees and migrant families, especially women and children, have voices that are not heard and to share their demands, expectations, hopes and thoughts through their own voice. The target group was the participants of the commission. We had a stand outside the official event of our ministry, delivered Syrian Women's and children's handwritten messages translated in English and took the responses from the members of the target group and in return, we presented handmade gifts made by Syrian children that Women's Education and Culture Foundation provided support for. This enabled Women's Education and Culture Foundation to be the voice of these Syrian Women in Turkey.

Women's Education and Culture Foundation is conscious of the importance of education. We "Don't give the fish but teach them to fish" through vocational, educational and developmental courses and support programs such as "Women's Health Trainings" to raise awareness about women health; "Cooking & Baking Certificate Programs" to promote women's self-sufficiency and financial independence; "Career Counseling and Education Center" for women and youth: Psychological Counseling (free of charge), Personal Development Workshops, Handicrafts Workshops; "Weekend Educational Support Programs" for youth; Seminars and Conferences (Fatih Sultan Mehmet University "Addiction Training", etc.), aid (in kind and in cash, scholarship, international aid support, etc.), "Soup Kitchen", "HEKVA Youth" which is a voluntary group of young and idealist women that conducts social responsibility campaigns, cultural activities and seminars.

As stated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development "social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure play a critical role in 'transforming our world'". Women play a critical role in sustainable development. They provide a source for their family's consumption and income. Many women and girls work in temporary jobs without any social security and under very inhuman circumstances. Due to their lack of professional efficiency and career orientation, they end up dependent both financially and psychologically. As Women's Education and Culture Foundation we contribute to the solution through educational, social and professional support for women and girls in addition to young boys. We also encourage the United Nations to provide wider sources and sustainable infrastructure to overcome these problems permanently.

All individuals notwithstanding of their gender or place in a State, ought to have equal access to fundamental human rights such as food, education, logistics and health. The empowerment of women and girls through education and professional training would be the long-term investment to the sustainable development and well-being of ali individuals. As mentioned above Women's Education and Culture Foundation plays an active role to achieve these goals and encourages the United Nations commissions and all structures to provide sufficient and satisfying support in the national, local and international level.

Education is a fundamental human right. It directly determines the integration, participation and contribution to the well-being of society. All levels of education is crucial for children, youth and other members of the family to have an equally developed society. Unfortunately, today so many women and girls have limited access or no access even to the basic education. Recognizing this issue, Women's Education and Culture Foundation plays an active role for the education and vocational capability to reach women and girls among the socio-economically disadvantaged community. International and global reports indicate that lack of education is a result of various reasons, the most common of which is the economic reasons. The need to have an income prevents women from getting education. With this sensitivity Women's Education and Culture Foundation also calls for governments to increase women and girls' access to education in order for them to fully participate in their communities and actualize their potential and skills for the well-being of themselves, their families and eventually the whole society. They must also have fair circumstances, abilities and professional qualifications as the ones who raise future generations.

The points and issues mentioned above are the main problems and also directly related to the priority theme of this year's commission. With this in mind, Women's Education and Culture Foundation believes the resolution of these problems in a sustainable and equity-based level would result in the "sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls."

All in all, Women's Education and Culture Foundation recognizes and puts great emphasis on the social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure and empowerment of women and girls especially in the socio-economically disadvantaged level; takes a step to overcome the problems and be a part of a solution; encourages the United Nations to take necessary actions in a wider and larger scale with a more intensive structure and is ready, happy to provide expected support locally and nationally in Turkey but also in the international and global level.

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Statement submitted by Right Livelihood Award Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Statement

From victim to survivor: holistic care as a human rights standard and a condition for women's rights.

Initiated in Bukavu, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the holistic care model has become a good practice in terms of both health and humanitarian services. At Panzi Hospital, each rape survivor has a social assistant assigned to her, who designs a tailor-made healing pathway that includes physical and psychological care, legal aid, and at a later stage socio-economic support. This model is exceptional, as in most humanitarian settings services for survivors are provided separate from the health system, and often through unconnected programmes provided by different non-governmental organizations. By providing survivors with all these services in one place and in an interconnected manner, survivors can access the services necessary for their individual recovery more easily. Integrating services in a health institution is also critical to ensure their sustainability and to avoid specialised services for survivors reducing the risk of stigmatisation.

A Unique Model Contributing Directly to Women's Empowerment and Women's Rights

Rape and other forms of sexual violence are being used systematically as a weapon of war in numerous conflicts worldwide to terrorise and destabilise entire populations. Perpetrators target civilians and conduct violent acts of gang rape, sexual slavery, and other atrocities. Survivors face a cascade of consequences from permanent physical and sexual injuries, to long-term, debilitating Post-traumatic stress disorder. Moreover, survivors from every conflict ranging from Kosovo to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Colombia have reported stigmatisation. Victims are rejected by families and communities, often encountering victim-blame and abandonment. This stigma contributes to the silence on sexual violence, which further exacerbates the structural and gender inequalities within political, economic, cultural and social structures.

Women are disproportionately targeted and are subsequently more likely to suffer the consequences of sexual violence. They are also key players in conflict-resolution and peacebuilding. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security reflects the significance of empowered women, recognising the crucial participation of women to promote peace and security through greater decision-making power in matters related to conflict prevention and resolution. Providing all survivors with access to a holistic model of care, covering medical, psychological, legal and socioeconomic needs is a concrete way to empower women towards demanding their rights and creating change both within their countries and globally.

This health model gives more than holistic individual care; it provides a platform for achieving a healthy life at the micro-(person) and meso-(local society) levels and, if conscientiously and systematically implemented in all health care structures, facilitates achievement of the right to health for all on the macro (national) level. Based on genuine listening to a harmed girl's or woman's personal narrative, personalised care is planned, implemented, and documented with the aim of achieving health and reintegration into society. Central and unique to the holistic approach of the Panzi Model is the concept of compassionate care, characterised by quality care, confidentiality, respect and self-determination. The basic standpoint of this model is empowerment of women as the foundation for constructing a plausible and prosperous society.

The holistic approach has a direct impact on preventing and ending wartime rape. At the individual level, this includes the enhancement of survivors' wellbeing, and the encouragement for other victims to seek care. Moreover, the empowerment of survivors decreases vulnerability to further violence. At the care system level, benefits include programme sustainability and cost-effectiveness. At the societal level, working in a holistic manner implies addressing the project at its roots. It promotes an environment in which sexual violence is no longer tolerated and perpetrators are held accountable.

Through holistic care, victims are transformed into survivors, empowered to become agents of change within their communities. When the wellbeing and resilience of survivors improves, they are more likely to stand up for their rights. As victims transform into agents of change, they increase their participation in decision-making processes within their households and their communities.

The Holistic Care Model: a Universal Human Rights Standard for Survivors of Sexual Violence

In Resolution 2106 (2013), the United Nations Security Council "recognise[s] the importance of providing timely assistance to survivors of sexual violence, urges United Nation entities and donors to provide non-discriminatory and comprehensive health services, including sexual and reproductive health, psychosocial, legal and livelihood support and other multi-sectoral services for survivors of sexual violence, taking into account the specific needs of persons with disabilities."

According to the United Nations Basic Principles and Guidelines on the right to a remedy and reparation for victims of gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law, victims should be provided with full and effective reparation, which includes rehabilitation: "Rehabilitation should include medical and psychological care as well as legal and social services."

In his 2016 and 2018 reports on conflict-related sexual violence, the United Nations Secretary-General reiterated the obligation and due diligence of states to provide survivors of wartime rape with a holistic set of health and care services, integrating legal, medical and psychosocial care, also for rural areas and children born from rape.

The current Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict has emphasised the need to foster "national ownership and leadership for a sustainable and holistic survivor-centred response."

The holistic care model is clearly a human rights standard that all states should aim at implementing and supporting, in their efforts to end rape and sexual violence as weapons of war.

Recommendations

Implementing sustainable victim-centred holistic care should be at the core of the efforts of the international community in achieving Sustainable Development Goal five on gender equality, Sustainable Development Goal three on health, and Sustainable Development Goal 16 on peace. This model should be made accessible to all victims of wartime rape.

Developing holistic care models should be part of a genuine commitment to end sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict contexts. We call on the international community to listen and involve survivors and women's organisations working to end sexual violence and achieve women's rights. United Nations member states should abide by their national, regional and international commitments to end sexual

violence in conflicts. This means establishing sexual violence in conflict as a crime in their legal systems and/or implement laws; ensuring that the justice system is efficient and functional, accessible and driven by the universal goal to end impunity; implementing prevention programmes, in schools and for the public, at all levels, to ensure that sexual violence won't be tolerated anymore. Moreover, United Nations member states should adopt mechanisms of transitional justice which grant survivors with the recognition of the harm they suffered and with proper reparations schemes; this includes acknowledging their own responsibility in the perpetuation of sexual violence in conflict and establishing a national reparation fund addressing all 5 forms of reparations. Finally, we call on the international community to establish an international reparation mechanism, in cooperation with non-governmental organisations and survivors, to provide symbolic and concrete reparation to all victims, and which would include access to holistic care.

The Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation is an international human rights organisation working together with survivors of wartime sexual violence from around the world. Drawing attention to the most shameful crimes committed during conflicts, the Foundation envisions a world in which rape as a weapon of war is no longer tolerated. The Foundation works for a future where survivors worldwide receive the holistic care they need and obtain reparations; where they have the freedom to speak out and to organise globally to end wartime sexual violence. Through international advocacy and country-based programmes, the Foundation supports survivors in their struggle for recognition and their active participation in the development of international and national policies related to justice, peace and women's rights.

The Right Livelihood Award Foundation honours and supports courageous people and organisations offering visionary and exemplary solutions to the root causes of global problems. In total there are now 174 Laureates from 70 countries and working in different fields, including human rights and sustainable development. The Right Livelihood Award Foundation aims to provide long-term support to its Laureates and it seeks to enhance the protection of those award recipients whose lives and liberty are at risk. The Foundation's protection program includes, among other things, regular threat monitoring and of country situations and advocacy before the United Nations' mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights.

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Statement submitted by Niger Delta Women's Movement for Peace and Development, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

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* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Statement

Social Protection Systems, Access to Public Services and Sustainable Infrastructure for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls

Women and girls facing double and multiple discrimination in Africa are among the furthest behind and need to participate in political processes and have access to social protection to achieve the Agenda 2030. This includes especially women and girls with disabilities.

The Africa Index Gender Equality Index 2015 indicated that, across Africa, women and men experience different opportunities, conditions, and privileges; they earn different wages, do not have the same access to education and are not always equal before the law. Lack of access to education puts a great barrier for women and girls from being empowered hence denying them from participating in political and socio-economic process. Specially those women and girls with a disability and from disadvantaged communities, continue to be left behind in both development and humanitarian actions. There is a need for the international community to promote the participation of these women in national, regional, and global institutions and processes in order to identify strategies and actions to empower women and girls who face double and multiple discriminations and ensure their participation and leadership in the implementation of the of internationally agreed development goals and other commitments, and the full realization of their human rights and dignity.

In reflection to this year's theme of the Commission on the Status of Women, "social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls" and in the Sustainable Development Goals principle of "Leave no one behind" and "The furthest behind first" we must confront and address multiple discrimination faced by women especially women with disability, women living in slum communities and above all disadvantaged women at all levels. The challenges faced by women especially women with disabilities include lack of access to public services and infrastructure

Currently, women and girls, especially those with disability and from disadvantaged communities, continue to be left behind in both development and political actions. There is absence or small presence of these groups in the institutions and processes of decision making.

The principles of equality and non-discrimination form the basis of all human rights instruments. It is therefore clear that as a matter of human rights law, all women must be entitled to the full enjoyment of their human rights which include participation in governance processes. Women are not a homogenous group of rights holders and discrimination against them can be expressed in many different forms and contexts.

As noted at the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women, there are more than one billion people with disabilities worldwide, and there are significant differences in the prevalence of disability between men and women in both developing and developed countries: male disability prevalence rate is 12 per cent while female disability prevalence rate is 19.2 per cent. That means that there are 600 girls and women with disabilities. Moreover, there is strong evidence to show that women and girls with disabilities disproportionally face greater poverty, lack of opportunities, and denial of political and social rights due to the persistence of certain cultural, legal and institutional barriers, which makes them the victims of multiple discrimination. They do not have access to public services sustainable infrastructure which are services provided for the state for all to enjoy due to the several limitations

and challenges in the design and conceptualisation of these services. For, policy makers fail to recognise the intersectional and multiple dimensions of the lives of women and girls with disabilities. Women with disabilities experience unique discrimination resulting from the interaction between their gender and disability and are at a higher risk of facing multiple forms of discrimination.

For the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and other international development strategies, it crucial to empower disadvantaged and support women and girls to engage stakeholders to find solutions for inclusion especially political participation to ensure that no woman is left behind.

Social protection systems help individuals and families, especially the poor and vulnerable, cope with crises and shocks, find jobs, improve productivity, invest in the health and education of their children, and protect the aging population.

Problems of disability are largely manifested in social contexts and social relations, rather than in an individual's medical condition. People living and interacting with persons with disabilities tend to treat them differently in relation to their disabilities. These discriminations prevent them from utilizing their full potential and contributing to national development thereby preventing of being education. Education and empowerment are strongly linked and given their denial of accessing education, these women consequently become a burden on the society.

A public service is a service provided by government for all its citizens. Every citizen in a given country has a right to the country's public services. Given that education and employment have a strong link to public service, which include jobs, wages etc women are therefore likely to be denied and not have equal access to public services. In a recent report by UN Women, on "Leave no one behind" on a gender audit, it was revealed that that inaccessibility of services, especially those provided by public institution, causes direct and indirect discrimination, social isolation and marginalization. In Africa, especially in the sub-Sahara Africa, most public buildings do not have disability compliance, hence, put a great challenge on women with disability to access the facilities for their health care thereby excluding them socially.

For the women with disability, the gap in infrastructure is a heavy burden as it further isolates and put a barrier for their participation and inclusion in all aspects of social process such as access to information, socio-economic and political process. As such compounding and multiplying their vulnerability at ali levels. Citing of these infrastructures do not take the most end users such as women and girls and especially women with disability who are physically challenges in diverse ways into considerations.

Recommendations:

1. Political participation and Inclusion in Sustainable Development Goal Implementation Planning

Women and girls with disabilities and other discriminations must be part of political processes on all levels. They shall speak for themselves and take decisions.

Also women and girls with disability especially must be a top priority in planning and designing of national development policies for the Sustainable Development Goals and "Leave No One Behind."

2. Social Protection

Social Protection for all needs to include multiple discriminated women and girls. Given the huge discrimination against women and girls with disability, social protection system must prioritise disadvantaged women and women with disability as a means to empower them economically and provide for their needs in the society.

3. Dis-aggregated data

National statistics and indicators women and girls must include a component on vulnerable women and girls especially women and girls with disability for an effective monitoring and reporting. Improving data on women disability will facilitate evidence to raise awareness of the scale of the problem and learning on how to address barriers is key

4. Legislation and implementation of legislation

The Sustainable Development Goal 5 strongly called all stakeholders to "Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels". It is not enough to adopt the policies to promote gender equality but there is to put in place effective implementation strategies for real results and outcome of these policies and legislation at the national level to ensure that all women and girls, which include women with disability, vulnerable and disadvantage women are not left behind in the Sustainable Development Goals.

5. Education

Less than 5 per cent of children and young persons with disabilities have access to education and training; and girls and young women face significant barriers to particip[illegible]ng in social life and development" (Secretary-General of the United Nations [illegible] his report on the Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled, A/59/169, paragraph 79. This form of discrimination against girls and women must be addressed to address the wide gap on inequality that threaten sustainable development.

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Statement submitted by International Planned Parenthood Federation, Western Hemisphere Region, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

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Please recycle

Statement

Social protection systems and public services are part of Member States' positive human rights obligations to provide an adequate standard of living to all people, including social, economic and cultural rights such as housing, food, water, sanitation, health, education, and fair and just employment. It is fundamental that social protection services cover and reach all people, in all parts of the country, regardless of any form of status, as all people are entitled to human rights. In creating efficient and effective social protection systems, access to public services, and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, it is critical to consider women's various roles, interests and needs and the ways in which these interlinkages have the potential to transform social and economic structures to secure women's positions (D Chopra, Section 2(a)).

Interventions must target the position of women and girls in society, not just their material needs. Interventions should address both immediate, short-term needs (water, healthcare, childcare, employment) as well as contribute to guaranteeing the long-term needs not just of women, but for society as a whole. These include changing structural inequalities in society in social, cultural, economic, civil and political spheres, as well as in the exercise of the rights (D Chopra, Section 2(b)). Gender sensitive social protection measures must take into account not only women's needs, time and energy constraints, but aim to make social and economic structures more equitable in order to give women more power (D. Chopra Section 2.1).

Many social protection systems and public services have eligibility requirements that end up excluding those who most need them by requiring specific family structures, such as nuclear or parent-headed households. However, many household structures and family forms exist across the world, facing challenges that require tailored policy responses. These include: traditional nuclear families; divorced and separated parents with children; extended multi-generational families; female-headed households with children; relative-headed households and alternative carers, such as where aunts, cousins or extended family members care for younger relatives; civil unions; same-sex couples with or without children; polygamous families; migrant transnational families — including mothers and fathers, and youth, working abroad to sustain their children, parents and/or other family members back home; families who need to care for relatives who are living with HIV and AIDS, with disabilities, who are ill or elderly, or with children with special needs; households headed by children and adolescents; households headed by grandmothers with orphaned children; as well as those without families and safe households to go home to (e.g. homeless persons, including due to mental illness, domestic violence and sexual abuse, or the case of children and adolescents who have run away from home as a result of neglect). Those living in diverse forms of families are often those most in need of social protection systems — children orphaned in humanitarian or crisis settings, extended family members living together after an emergency or after being rejected from their nuclear family or fleeing from an abusive home life — and governments should ensure they receive the support they require.

As a guiding principle, legislative and policy development should pay particular attention to equal rights within marriage, to gender equality and to protection from violence, including child abuse, sexual and gender-based violence. Policies and legislation should address family formation in order to foster healthy, resilient families, by protecting rights to enter marriage with the free and full consent of both intending spouses, by ending child, early and forced marriage, and through universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, including modern methods of contraception, and to dissolve unions on a fair and equitable basis. Family-friendly policies also include those that support balancing work and family responsibilities,

including through paid maternity and paternity leave, affordable quality child care and support for the care of the elderly, the ill and people living with HIV or disabilities.

Governments should invest first in understanding local systems and their strengths, then identify intervention points where existing community systems are insufficient to meet existing challenges. The needs of people in vulnerable situations should be the primary consideration the design and delivery of services and should play an active role in describing their systems and support requirements. These may be different from the assumptions made by decision-makers; strong people-centred consultation and engagement is required. Local communities should be empowered to identify what wellbeing means and looks like in their local context; programme and interventions should support and reinforce that local definition, rather than impose external definitions of successful development. There are diverse, creative ways to build social protection systems that invest in and empower communities when they identify and lead on the support they require.

As many studies have shown, families can be a central locus of people's well-being, emotionally and financially, and a cornerstone of children's upbringing. H wever, families and household settings are also common sites of discrimination, abuse, violence and exploitation (World Health Organization (2002) World Report on Health and Violence Ch. 1 "Violence — A global public health problem" p. 3). Failure to recognize families in all their diverse forms, as described above, and to address specific challenges and rights violations that occur within households perpetuates cycles of poverty, social exclusion and inequality, undermines human capital accumulation and leaves many behind.

Schools and health centres can function as focal points for public services and social support mechanisms in the community, promoting community cohesion and strengthening the fabric of social bonds. In emergencies and humanitarian crises or even conflict zones, first aid, food distribution, and emergency response can operate from schools and health centres, also serving as de-facto or explicit safe spaces for vulnerable and marginalized populations. There are examples where this structure builds strong local support for community education, keeps teachers and students in schools, and increases the community values for schools, which become off limits for fighting or violent attack and provide critical space for communities to learn from each other, organize, share resources and education, and strengthen social ties. This in turn builds and keeps the community fabric strong and contributes to recovery and resilience.

Public services are more effective when integrated, and this should be built in to service design. For example, linking education and health services can be more efficient and support community cohesion. Health screenings and vaccination programs can be carried out at schools, as can public health information programs, such as those training teachers, parents and students on healthy nutrition, comprehensive sexuality education, or human rights. Co-locating health services at schools contributes to educational achievement and attainment and facilitates the return to school of young parents. In some settings, childcare facilities should be provided in schools, particularly during and after conflict when many young girls are raped or lack access to sexual and reproductive he..lth services and can only return to school if there are childcare facilities available. This is one of the core strategies in education in emergencies and post-conflict transition programming.

All services must be available, accessible, acceptable, and quality, regardless if they are provided by the state, a private provider or other organisation, and beneficiaries are entitled to the same level of service and care whether or not it is

state-subsidised or privately funded. We recommend that governments undertake the following actions:

- All interventions must target the position of women and girls in society, not just their material needs; they should address both short and long term needs of women and girls and address structural inequalities.
- Recognise and support through legislation, policy and programmes, diverse forms of the family, ensuring that all family groupings have the protection of the law and access to support systems as needed.
- Reduce/limit institutionalization of children, women, the elderly, those living with mental illness and others, and prioritize care within diverse forms of the family with government support by redirecting resources for institutions to family-based or alternative care.
- Ensure that legislative and policy development and reforms guarantee the respect and protection of the human rights and well-being of all individuals within families and households, without discrimination and regardless of family form.
- Engage local communities and vulnerable populations in identifying their support needs and ensuring that policies, programmes and interventions reflect culturally specific concepts of wellbeing.
- Consider integrating some public services such as health and education, to allow for greater access and increased efficiencies.
- Ensure that social protection and support services are of the same quality as privately provided services.

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Statement submitted by IPAS, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Statement

We welcome the discussion on next year's priority theme: "Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls." The 2019 session of the Commission on the Status of Women provides a critical opportunity to accelerate progress in fulfilling the Beijing Declaration, the Platform for Action, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

In accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action, the International Conference on Population and Development, and the Global Goals focused on health and gender equality, and the targets calling for universal access to reproductive health and rights, countries must prioritize advancing women's and girls' access to comprehensive sexuality education, contraception, and safe abortion.

Despite progress following the International Conference on Population and Development launch in 1994, women and girls around the world continue to face social, economic, legal and health-system barriers to accessing contraception and safe abortion services. Key factors contributing to low contraceptive prevalence and high rates of unintended pregnancies are: limited or unreliable contraceptive supplies, low levels of education among women, scarce financial resources, long distances to obtain services, lack of transportation, poor infrastructure, and partner's opposition to family planning. Improving accessibility, including free or low-cost services, and quality of health services and providers is essential to positive health outcomes, especially for reducing maternal mortality and morbidity.

Research shows that even in countries where abortion is legal, women's and girls' access to safe services may be restricted. This includes a high service costs and a lack of adequate health facilities and skilled professionals. Women who cannot access safe abortion services often resort to clandestine procedures that put their health and lives at risk. They also often avoid seeking treatment for resulting health complications because of stigma and fear of harassment, arrest and imprisonment.

A recent study of the World Health Organization and the Guttmacher Institute found expanding legal access to abortion and increasing use of medication abortion has significantly improved the safety of induced-abortion services over the past decade. It also found that in legally restrictive settings, where minimum standards of the WHO safety guidelines are partially met, results in less-safe procedures.

In this context, we urge governments to do the following:

- Accelerate legal measures repeal laws that criminalize women and girls who seek abortion. In most countries, legalizing abortion is a precursor to planning for and delivering high-quality safe abortion services. Women's access to safe and legal abortion is as relevant to gender equality as women's equal access to education, employment, adequate food and housing. It puts women's and girls' lives, health and human rights at the core of human development.
- Provide universal access to non-judgmental sexual and reproductive health services, including contraception and safe abortion care. Services must respect the rights to confidentiality, privacy and informed consent.
- Strengthen health system capacity to deliver medical abortion, especially in rural and low-income areas. Decentralizing medical abortion services will facilitate access to more women through multiple cadres of primary and community health-care providers. The availability of medical abortion (or abortion with pills) make abortions safer, particularly in low-resource settings.

Unlike surgical procedures, medical abortion does not require health care facilities, special medical equipment, or specially trained healthcare providers.

- Increase efforts to prevent and provide care to those affected by sexual violence, including access to emergency contraception and safe abortion. Young women and victims of violence are also more likely to need second trimester abortion services. This makes it even more important to ensure that public health services include trained providers that are willing to provide second trimester abortion.
- Mandate comprehensive sexuality education programs that include non-biased information on contraception and safe abortion, and that are linked to sexual and reproductive health services. Reaching youth, particularly adolescent girls and young women—both in and out of school—with comprehensive sexuality education is key to preventing unwanted pregnancy, HIV and other STIs, and to meet the global goals focused on health and gender equality. Governments must implement and monitor sustainable comprehensive sexuality education programs, by establishing gender-sensitive indicators and quality education systems and infrastructure, which should include qualified staff, appropriate facilities, tools, teaching materials and methods.
- Promote consistent, community-level health education with evidence-based messages that debunk myths and misconceptions associated with family planning and abortion.

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Statement submitted by European Women's Lobby, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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Please recycle

Statement

Social protection systems, access to social services and sustainable infrastructures are our collective mechanisms of solidarity, based on the premise that every woman, man, girl and boy has the right to enjoy an equal life in dignity and free of violence. Social protection is a human right recognised by several international legal instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Social protection plays a vital role both in preventing women's poverty and in lifting women out of poverty. Social protection systems must be protected, expanded and provide sufficient means to fulfil their role as a mechanism of income distribution and provision of social services.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action places the obligation on Governments to "create social security systems wherever they do not exist, or review them with a view to placing individual women and men on an equal footing, at every stage of their lives". Nonetheless, economic insecurity and austerity driven policies of the last decade have eroded social rights and aggravated existing inequalities in the enjoyment of social protection, access to public services and infrastructures, all of which disproportionately is affecting women.

Social protection systems, access to social services and sustainable infrastructures are also crucial to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Sustainable Development Goals). Governments have committed to "implement nationally appropriate social protection systems for all, including floors" for reducing and preventing poverty (Sustainable Development Goal 1.3). This commitment to universal protection for all is reaffirmed in the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation No. 202.

For the past decade, reduction in public spending has led to the erosion of investments in public services, which has had a major impact on women. In many countries, the public sector has been the driver for gender equality in employment. Public sector jobs provide better employment opportunities, better working conditions and pay, and provide conditions towards an enabling environment for both women and men to share paid and unpaid work: paid leave, care and other work-life balance options as outlined in the Agreed Conclusions of the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Cuts in public sector jobs directly affect women since women represent the vast majority of public sector workers. Cuts in this sector are a major threat to gender equality both in employment, and in the provision of publicly funded social services, which women rely on more than men.

Austerity has been disastrous for women; in many respects and particularly in their access to quality, affordable social services and sustainable infrastructures. It has resulted in cuts and curtailed services to end violence against women (VAW) and support for the victims of violence, including shelters and rape crisis services. Cuts in these services are a false economy, a serious threat to women's human rights, and a very high price for society to pay in the short, medium and long term as violence against women increase.

Cutbacks in public services imposed by austerity have a double impact on women: on the one hand, women's economic independence is compromised, and their poverty heightened. On the other hand, women are forced to cushion the impact of cutbacks in public service as the services are transferred back to the households. This, coupled with the reduction of work-life balance measures, threatens progress achieved to date, resulting in a rolling back of women's participation in all areas of life and a return to traditional gender roles.

The disadvantages faced by women in the labour market translate, in turn, into a wide gender pension gap, which means poverty for many women in the later stages of their lives. Pensions are a crucial mechanism of intergenerational solidarity inherent to social protection and a key factor in Sustainable Development Goal 1.3. However, benefit levels are often inadequate to tackle old age poverty, particularly for women. The pension income of women is negatively influenced by the outdated, male bread-winner model. The accumulation of gender inequalities over the life span; the gender pay gap; time spent out of the labour market to care for children and other dependent family members; and women's overrepresentation in part-time work and in low paid sectors of the economy, results in excessive gender income gaps in old age. In the European Union, the average gender pension gap is 40 per cent.

Therefore, we urge governments, in particular with regards to ongoing pension and taxation reforms, to close the gender pension gap and revise the outdated male breadwinner model in tax and social protection policies. Pension schemes should be designed to reduce economic inequalities between women and men and to ensure that both women and men can become equal earners and equal careers throughout their lives. We call for a universal adequate basic old age pension to provide a dignified standard of living for everybody, paying particular attention to the life-long earnings gap between women and men.

We urge governments to invest in social infrastructures and social services. Support women of all ages, from pregnancy, through motherhood and back to work through public services and social protection systems. Good quality and accessible obstetrics should be available for all mothers, regardless of their social status and economic conditions.

We call for individual, non-transferable paid parental leave. This would increase men's take up of leave and create the conditions to ensure that reconciliation of work, private and family life is a shared responsibility and not solely on the shoulders of women. Work-life balance policies should go hand in hand with the provision of publicly financed, good quality and accessible childcare and other care services throughout the life-cycle.

We call on governments to effectively implement gender equality mainstreaming as a means to transform societies for the benefit of all. This includes applying a gender equality perspective in the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies, including social protection, social services and sustainable infrastructures.

We urge governments and donors, as part of gender equality mainstreaming, to apply gender equality budgeting to ensure that revenue generated through collective taxation is allocated and public and donor money is spent in a way that will reduce gender inequalities and reduce women's unpaid work. It is also crucial that women have a say in how public money is spent, and that specific resources are allocated to tackle gender inequalities, in social protection, access to social services and in sustainable infrastructures.

In implementing gender equality mainstreaming, it is vital that government work in cooperation with civil society, specifically with women's and girls-led organisations, women human rights defenders and feminist groups. Only by effectively engaging civil society in this process, it will be possible to include women and girl's needs and interests in the political agenda at the local, national and international level.

We urge United Nations Member States to:

- Prevent profit-driven privatisation of public services and guarantee access to these services for all;

- Create the conditions in which women and men can become equal earners and equal carers throughout their lives by reshaping the outdated male breadwinner model that continues to define social protection systems in many countries to the detriment of women's equal access thereto;
- Uphold women's human rights by ensuring that there are no cutbacks to services designed to end male violence against women (VAW) and support the victims of violence;
- Implement public infrastructure to prevent, protect and provide exist options for victims of male violence of the sex industry.
- Introduce individual and non-transferable paid parental leave, to ensure a more equal sharing of care responsibilities in partnerships and families;
- Invest in and develop high quality, accessible and affordable care services across the life-cycle;
- Validate skills acquired in informal settings, to facilitate women's return to the labour market;
- Ensure a guaranteed income for all, throughout the life cycle;
- Ensure that pension reforms do not increase gender inequality — gender pension gap, recognizing women's different working life patterns;
- Establish a universal adequate basic old age pension, which is not means tested;
- Abolish tax and social security exemptions, especially in the low pay sector, such policies prevent contributing to social protection systems in the short term but have adverse impact in the long term, for example on pensions;
- Promote the implementation of gender equality mainstreaming and gender equality budgeting in the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies with the objective of achieving an ecological, social and gender sustainable economy.

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Statement submitted by International Council on Social Welfare, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

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Please recycle

Statement

Joint International Council on Social Welfare — International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse written statement.

The International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW), one of the oldest non-governmental organizations with a global reach, wholeheartedly supports the Commission on the Status of Women in its work aimed at social protection for girls and women of all ages. The International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, (INPEA), the only recognized non-governmental organization that is exclusively focused on addressing neglect, abuse and violence against older people, recognizes the importance of social protection as a critical component of a strategy to ensure protection from abuse for all women.

An integration of a gender perspective into social protection programmes and better visibility of all women within development theory and practice has been an important outcome of international and national efforts to upheld gender equality and empowerment. But much more needs to be done. Gender inequality remains in most societies. Women often encounter barriers in accessing income, assets and services and are disproportionately represented among the poor and disenfranchised in society. Older women bear the burden of the intersectionality of sex and age and frequently lack both income and access to public services.

The importance of a gender perspective in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes has been widely recognized as a tool for achieving gender equality. In this context social protection systems and schemes are no exception. To be effective they should not be gender-blind, particularly considering such factors as feminization of poverty and entrenched gender inequality undermine the efforts aimed at poverty alleviation. Our experience on the ground demonstrates that when the design of social protection schemes envisions "gender lens", considering gender dimensions at the household, community and state levels, such approach enhances the transformative role played by such schemes. To go further in the fight against gender inequality, social protection needs to be supported by interventions that improve women's access to productive resources and services, such as legal and housing, prevent domestic violence and promote empowerment by enhancing their capabilities, decision making power and agency.

Many gender-specific dimensions are indispensable when social protections systems are conceived or reformed. For example, maternity protection that ensures income security for pregnant women and mothers of new-born children and their families could be considered one of the key component of the transformative policies called for in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is essential to the achievement of multiple Sustainable Development Goals, including Goals 1,2, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 10. New effective coverage estimates for Sustainable Development Goals indicator 1.3.1 show that only 41.1 per cent of women with new-borns worldwide receive a maternity benefit, and only 15.8 per cent of childbearing women in Africa. (World Social Protection Report 2017-2019. Universal social protection to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. ILO, Geneva 2017, page 27).

Widows and divorcees of all ages need a secure foothold in society and providing this is vital to the broader struggle for gender equality. Policies such as property ownership and inheritance rights reform, registration of customary marriages, an widows' pensions can help address disadvantages faced by this group. Widowhood or divorce brings serious economic hardship to affected women, and the impact of marital death and divorce may cause widowed and divorced girls and women of all ages to be excluded socially and lose their homes and property once marriage ends.

However, responsive policies can buffer women against these loses: widows' pensions can serve as a temporary social protection measure, if transferred directly and securely to them; and preferential access to housing and shelters is another measure that can help widows and divorcees, particularly in developing countries. Policies that address systemic inequalities can enable women to support themselves in the face of a marital dissolution. These include reforms to credit markets, where women are particularly disadvantaged; ensuring equal ownership and inheritance rights for women; and securing customary marriages through registration and legal documentation

Taking into consideration the ageing of the world's population, recognition that gender inequality and empowering all women and girls is a life-long process and a life cycle analysis of gender equality is needed. The gender-sensitive social protection schemes can be much more successful in addressing the root causes of vulnerability and exclusion. A lifecycle approach is indispensable in this regard, given that different risks affect women and men differently at different points in their life.

While the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment has been increasingly recognized, we must not overlook some key segments in society such as older women. Focusing on girls and women of reproductive age is important for building a foundation for empowerment of women in old age, but this is only a partial strategy. A focus on older women in the later phases of their lives is also critical to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women of all ages.

Understanding and integrating gender-specific vulnerabilities can help with the implementation of gendered adaptation practices, eventually relieving some of the disproportionally high burden of the adverse effects of climate change that women of all ages bear. For example, older women are often overlooked in discussions of gender equality, empowerment and sustainable development. Although the world's ageing population is projected to reach 2 billion by 2050, with women age 60 years and older projected to comprise over 1 billion of the ageing population at that time. Studies demonstrate that less than 10 per cent of older women need institutional care at any given time in old age. However, the stereotypic conflation of old age and dependency establishes the basis for harmful policies as well as traditional practices that exclude older women from full participation in society and do not support or recognize older women's capacity for productive and active ageing.

There are several gaps in achieving gender equality and empowerment for all women, specifically older women. While women and men experience old age differently, even though both experience age discrimination, older women also experience negative stereotypes that label them unimportant, limit their access to services and entitlements, and cause them to face cumulative life disadvantages due to lack of education, decision-making and participation in public life, access to age appropriate health care, lower earning capacity and the additional barrier of discriminatory gender-based laws and customs that apply to property and inheritance. These negative dimensions need to be considered and addressed when social protection schemes are conceived and implemented.

Discriminatory laws and practices against older women continue to fuel violence and abuse of every kind. Older women are often excluded from studies on violence, based on ageist assumptions that this group does not experience domestic violence or sexual abuse, would not remember such abuse due to age-related cognitive limitations, and would refuse to disclose such experiences because of a distaste for sharing unpleasant memories. Age cut-offs for subjects in these studies are often up to age 49, the presumed end of reproductive functioning.

Guaranteeing the free and equal right of women to own and inherit property, ensuring secure tenure of property and housing by women stays on the political and socio-economic agendas in many societies. Denial of such right represents a cle

abuse that should not be tolerated. Many older women fall victims to various financial manipulations and crooked financial schemes that rob them of their assets and property. Harmful traditional practices continue with older women accused of witchcraft, justifying some of the most horrific forms of abuse against them.

Another important policy issue that affects older women and their social and economic protection in old age is the need for recognition and valuing of unpaid work. Girls and women of all ages take on responsibility disproportionately in the family for caregiving of children and other care dependent family members, limiting their involvement in the formal workplace. If working outside the home, women of all ages are more likely than men to work in the informal economy, creating disadvantages for receiving pension benefits in old age. Older women are more likely than men to experience poverty, including extreme poverty in old age in most countries, and developed economies are no exception. It is critical to recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibilities within the household and family as nationally appropriate to ensure women are not disadvantaged economically in old age due to cumulative disadvantages throughout the life course. It is also critical to undertake reforms to give all women equal rights to economic resources as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws. This represents a tangible fight against poverty and is a clear boon to sustainable development.

To ensure that gender equality goals for older women are monitored, nations must include disaggregated data by gender and age on economic status and other indicators on an ongoing basis. For example, indicators such as "percentage of the population covered by social protection floors/systems" should be disaggregated by age and sex to allow the tracking over time older women's poverty and the outcome of policy initiatives to eliminate it. Monitoring and hence the creation of statistical visibility of inequalities creates the policy space for civil society to demand new or more effective public policies to correct inequality.

We share the conviction that the achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is simply not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full rights and opportunities. Beginning with enjoyment of equal access to education and equal opportunities for employment, the world community should continue combatting gender based-discrimination and violence in all forms it may assume, including old-age discrimination and violence.

In this light both the International Council on Social Welfare and the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse strongly believe that wider use of internationally agreed instruments such as the ILO Recommendation 202 on National Floors of Social Protection could facilitate the fight against poverty and promote women's empowerment. Social protection schemes already in use in many countries have proven critical in redressing the disproportionate impact of economic, social and environmental shocks on women, but the potential of such schemes is far from exhausted. Much more needs to be done to fully correct the disadvantages and discrimination that women still face on the labour market, in sharing of reproductive work between genders and in the education systems. However, there is a clear synergy among gender, social protection and environmental sustainability. Better and more gender-proactive social protection schemes can bring about structural changes in the economy and society, facilitating both mitigation and adaptation.

Co Signing NGO's with ECOSOC Status

Association for Women's Career Development in Hungary

Widows for Peace Through Democracy

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Statement submitted by Northern Ireland Women's European Platform, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

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Please recycle

Statement

Social protection, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure are all critical and inextricably linked elements of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. In Northern Ireland, all three elements are particularly central to women's lives, as the economy is continuing to develop slowly and only 67 per cent of women aged 16–64 are employed. As Northern Ireland is predominantly rural, it also faces particular challenges in access to public services, while service provision and visible commitment to equality have been significantly affected by austerity.

Globally, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals also requires effective implementation of all three elements. However, this depends on strong global commitment to empowering women and girls, which remains a significant challenge.

In Northern Ireland, there is currently no visible commitment to gender equality and no formal infrastructure for engaging women in policy and decision making; in addition, the devolved Assembly is not sitting and there has been no Executive since January 2017. It has been difficult to see a gender perspective in public policy, while gender-based stereotypes remain strong; the most recent draft Programme for Government (2016) makes no reference to gender.

Renewed political will, and a commitment to gender sensitive application of resources, is required to create mechanisms that effectively protect women and girls and promote women's empowerment. Such an approach is also essential to ensure implementation of the principles of United Nations Security Resolution 1325. Northern Ireland remains a society emerging from conflict, and the experience of women continues to be underreported, while women remain side-lined in post conflict reconstruction and community development. A sustainable infrastructure for empowering women and girls is a key area for action, while strong social protection mechanisms also required to ensure women can take control of their lives and live free from fear. This is particularly important in the current context as the United Kingdom withdraws from the European Union, insofar as European Union legislation has been pivotal in underpinning equality and human rights.

Social Protection

Social protection is at the heart of international human rights treaties, as a cornerstone for empowerment and the ability of people to fulfil their potential. In the United Kingdom including Northern Ireland, social protection is enshrined in law; however, issues around implementation and resourcing of policies affect women's and girls' effective enjoyment of social protection. Austerity has been a significant factor in this regard, and it is estimated that 85 per cent of benefit cuts in the United Kingdom have fallen on women, who are more reliant on benefits than men, as women take on the greatest part of unpaid care work and as such face barriers to full time employment. A particular area of concern is the introduction of Universal Credit, which introduces work related obligations on all parents with children over one. It also caps child related benefit payments to two children, with the only exception children conceived through rape.

We ask that social protection of women and girls is made a key priority through action across a range of policy areas:

Protecting Women and Girls Economically

- Undertaking a gender impact analysis of any new arrangements.

- Ensuring pension arranges treat women and men equitably and provide adequate compensation for any policy changes during an individual's working life.
- Taking account of the risk of abuse through economic arrangements, e.g. through offering split benefit payments to partners and protecting women in divorce.
- Tackling gender stereotypes leading to women predominating in sectors with low pay and precarious work and encouraging girls to continue in education.

Safeguarding Women and Girls

- Implementing and resourcing policies tackling violence against women and girls, including ratifying the Istanbul Convention.
- Implementing legal protections against discrimination, including discrimination in the workplace, pregnancy, maternity and parental leave related discrimination and sexual harassment.
- Providing effective access to justice and redress for women subjected to discrimination.
- Providing responsive and sensitive access to justice for women subjected to violence, including rape complainers.
- Challenging 'rape culture' and male dominated perspectives of sexuality and relationships.

Access to Public Services

Access to public services is linked to social protection, in that public services are intended to be universal and accessible to all. In particular women on lower incomes typically rely on them to meet their basic needs, while women also shoulder a disproportionate amount of unpaid care work. Therefore, the reduced funding and provision of public services resulting from austerity and policy changes constitutes a specific threat to gender equality as well as women's wellbeing. Women and girls in rural areas are particularly disadvantaged due to compounding factors such as lack of transport and digital infrastructure.

While sufficient investment in public services remains essential, action across a number of policy areas can help ensure women and girls have access to core services. Critical to this is investment in digital infrastructure, which not only can improve access to digital services, but can also contribute to widening access to learning and knowledge, as is emphasised in Sustainable Development Goal 4. This has particular potential for women in rural areas, as radio and mobile technology is now often available even in very low income and remote areas. Investment in education and training is, however, essential alongside roll out of digital services, to ensure that women of all ages and backgrounds can benefit equitably. There must be a specific focus on appropriate training for older women, women with low literacy, newcomer and refugee women, and also women with disabilities.

We ask, however, that access to public services for women and girls is safeguarded and promoted by investment in critical services including health and social care, education, public transport and child care. Co-production and gender impact analysis in service development, linked with rural proofing, is essential to ensure adequate provision. Gender and socio economically disaggregated statistics will assist in this.

Infrastructure for Gender Equality

Infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is at the heart of Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, and is essential to ensure continued, effective engagement of women and visibility for gender equality in policy making. Yet, effective infrastructure is often missing or has been reduced in scope in recent years. In Northern Ireland, there is currently no infrastructure, while women in Northern Ireland also do not enjoy the same protections as afforded to women elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Legislation passed in 2016 also restricts organisations receiving public funding in how they engage with policy and advocacy work, which has frustrated the work of many civil society organisations.

We ask that infrastructure is strengthened through mainstreaming a gender perspective in policy making, as outlined above. In addition, we ask that steps are taken to strengthen mechanisms for engaging women in policy making through:

Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Policy and Decision Making

- Robust gender impact analysis in all policy and decision making.
- Strengthening gender competence within government and public bodies.
- Identification of inequalities, with appropriate strategies and action plans developed.
- Collection of data and enabling gender disaggregation of existing statistics.

Enabling Effective Engagement of Women

- Adequate resourcing of women's networks.
- Funding for organisations and initiatives seeking to build engagement capacity with women in grass roots communities.
- Implementation of good engagement practice, including engaging women and girls at an early stage of policy development, in line with recommendations by the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women Committee.

Protecting Core Freedoms and Rights of all Women and Girls

- Ensuring the nationality rights of all women and girls are upheld, including migrants, refugees and widows.
- Developing timely and transparent processes for seeking asylum, citizenship and residency, with adequate support for applicants with limited literacy or language skills.
- Providing support for women from Black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee backgrounds to access services, training and employment.
- Ensuring clarity on rights and entitlements for European Union and British citizens following the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union

Conclusion

The Sustainable Development Goals will only be secured by copper fastening women's rights and equality, taking account of intersectionality. Urgent action across the themes is required to protect and promote women's empowerment in the context of significant change and challenge to human rights and equality frameworks across

the globe. Northern Ireland Women's European Platform support the conclusions of the High-Level Expert Group as a basis for action and call for strong agreed conclusions to support national level action.

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Statement submitted by Community Education Services (CES) Canada, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Statement

The Power of Educating Girls

Empowering women in society is more than an ideal; it is a basic human right. Among the most important of these rights is education. Educating a girl can result in transforming an entire community. A just and a free society begins to emerge when that happens. In countries like Kenya, there is a strong movement, particularly through non-governmental organizations to support the girl child, providing hope through education.

Former United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon stated, "Educating girls and giving them the tools to shape their own future has an incredible multiplier effect on economic growth. It leads to increased prosperity not just for individuals but for their communities and their societies. It provides returns for decades."

Community Education Services Canada has worked in rural Kenyan communities to ensure that those orphaned by HIV/Aids and who are poor and needy are given opportunity to learn and develop to the highest degree possible. Bright, motivated young people are now studying at secondary and post-secondary levels. Since 2004, over 3,000 scholarships have allowed youth to move forward in their lives. Of that number over 50 per cent have been directed to young women.

To the extent we believe in gender equity and allow access to education for girls, we open new doors of opportunity for employment, economic and social development. When women are empowered there will slowly emerge a new social contract and a healthier society. Moving forward, the strategy must involve a demonstrated passion and a relentless commitment to ending poverty. Providing access to education is more than an act of charity; it is an essential component of justice and the promotion of equal rights for all.

For many rural girls mired in poverty, with limited exposure to empowering role models, and side-lined by systemic political patronage, answers to social problems seem insurmountable. Of particular concern to women is HIV/Aids, substance abuse, lack of nutrition, corruption, family breakdowns and violence against women and children. It is critical therefore that solutions be developed by Kenyans for Kenyans and that participants include women.

There is a multiplier effect when girls achieve a secondary or post-secondary education. When one girl is educated, given time she will influence seven others and push them towards a better life. The reality is however, that so many girls in Kenya are raised in poverty and are consistently denied even a basic education. Educated young women have the energy and creativity to shape their future. They are inclined to use their education for good, protecting the environment, promoting democracy, defending human rights and fighting for equality between men and women.

Culture plays a central role in the political, economic and social life of communities. Local culture is a dynamic that has evolved through generations and therefore takes time to change. Retrogressive traditions such as female genital mutilation and early childhood marriage can only change as Kenyans re-define positive aspects of their culture. Creating a society where girls are valued to the same extent as boys is key to building a sense of belonging and identity to the family structure. Rooted in Kenyan culture is respect for its elders; and so any positive change must involve the senior generation, a group that typically has not had opportunity to attend school.

A critical component of education is leadership training and skill development. Community Education Services Kenya has created a leadership scholarship program

called "Shaping Kenya's Future". Topics include interpersonal skill development, character building and goal setting designed to promote independent learning and proactive problem solving. Through the setting of realistic and attainable goals, scholars will be able to measure and further develop their career and academic potential and aspire to a brighter future.

The Community Education Services School of Continuing Education ensures that an equal number of girls to boys will participate. Young women are benefitting and our experience has been that graduates of the program are taking on leadership roles in both private and public employment settings. Some have become involved in local and national elections as scrutineers and advisors; while others have experience as mentors, counsellors and teacher assistants within our school communities. A number have made their mark as entrepreneurs and business people. Alumnus of the leadership program are engaged in extracurricular education activities in schools promoting such topics as community health, sanitation and hygiene, healthy living and prevention of HIV/Aids.

This leadership initiative builds on skills not taught in the school curriculum. It encourages young people, both girls and boys to view themselves as "nation builders". It seeks to exemplify the leadership values they wish to see in their own leaders; namely, justice, integrity and trust. Topics explore the impact of using intellectual imagination, personal initiative, high level achievement and inner strength to overcome adversity. All participants have their own gift to bring, all can participate, all will make a difference.

Challenges we face in this 21st century can only be overcome through a combined effort to educate girls and boys together. They are a gift to the world and in large part our hope and our future. The life of the planet and the economic viability of societies that make up our world depend on it. This is the day and the time to revive, renew and shift our collective thinking. Education for all is a moral imperative, absolutely essential to our future. Tomorrow's leaders are seated in the classrooms of today. Let's give them the best possible chance to be the visionaries and game-changers our world so desperately needs.

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Statement submitted by Human Rights Advocates Inc., a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

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Please recycle

Statement

Increasing Social Protections for Women through Participation and Representation

I. Introduction and the Conflicts of Lack of Women Participation and Representation

Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance." These words were uttered by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but a necessary component in achieving the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). (General Assembly Res. 70/1, 59, U.N. Doc. A/RES/70/1 (Sep. 25, 2015).) For women and girls everywhere to live free from violence and discrimination, they must be afforded equal rights and opportunities. This idea is encapsulated in the Sustainable Development Goal's s fifth goal: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls." (Id.).

There are nine targets within the fifth goal aimed at gender equality, two being the most pertinent in achieving active participation and representation of women. First, to achieve parity, the nations should "[e]nsure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life." (UN Women, Sustainable Development Goals five: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality). Secondly, the nations should "[a]dopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels" (Id.).

"Every human being has the right to participate in decisions that define her or his life. This right is the foundation of the ideal of equal participation in decision-making among women and men. This right argues that since women know their situation best, they should participate equally with men to have their perspective effectively incorporated at all levels of decision-making, from the private to the public spheres of their lives, from the local to the global." (Rosa Miranda, Impact of women's participation and leadership on outcomes, http://www.un.org/womenwatch /daw/egm/eql-men/docs/EP.7_rev.pdf.) The following is a comparative study of the global region's participation and representation of women in positions of power and decision-making.

II. Regional Comparisons of Women in Politics

a. Europe

Europe is one of the top five countries with the largest share of women ministers. (UN Women, Press Release: New IPU and UN Women map shows women's representation in politics stagnating). The total percentage of women's participation is 22.5 per cent, an increase from 21.6 per cent in 2015. Surprisingly, Nordic countries that normally have the highest women's representation, suffered the largest decrease globally in 2017, a 6.2 per cent from 2015. However, women still account for almost half of the executives in this region. Bulgaria has seen a tremendous increase, previously ranking 45th globally (2010), it now ranks first. Representation has risen from 17.6 per cent (2010) to 52.9 per cent.

Although the Nordic countries have suffered a setback, they promote women's leadership by requiring publicly listed companies to have at least 40 per cent of their board positions reserved for women. (Johanna Bjork, What Scandinavia Can Teach Us About Gender Equality, letsdomore.com.) In the 70's, Denmark, Sweden and Norway introduced voluntary gender quotas. (The Situation in the European Union, http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-pay-gap/situationeurope/index_en.htm). These quotas have worked so well that at least one country has done away with the program because it was no longer necessary. (Pande, Rohini, and Deanna Ford, Gender Quotas and Female Leadership, pg. 8 (2011) http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2012/Resources/7778105-1299699968583/7786210-1322671773271/Pande-Gender-Quotas-April-2011.pdf).)

b. Americas

The Americas is one of the top five countries with the largest share of women ministers. (UN Women, supra). They have seen an increase of 2.6 per cent from 2015, raising the percentage from 22.4 to 25. Although the increase seems minute, it has set a new high in the region. However, they also saw a decrease in women holding Heads of State and Heads of Government positions when the presidents of Brazil and Argentina left office.

Fluctuation varies from country to country, Canada and Nicaragua surpassed gender parity in ministerial positions. Additionally, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay approached or exceeded 30 per cent. However, Brazil continued its downward trend, dropping from a 25.6 per cent (2014), to 15.4 per cent (2015) to finally, four per cent (2017). (Id.).

A significant factor in women's participation and representation is gender stereotypes. In Latin America, women are often steered away from careers in architecture, law and engineering and pushed towards less developed skills, such as teaching and nursing. (Inter-American Development Bank, Latin American and Caribbean Women: Better Educated, Lower Paid [Oct. 15, 2012]).

c. Asia and Oceania

In Asia, women held 11 per cent of ministerial posts, a 0.4 per cent increase from 2015. Indonesia had the highest participation of women in government at 25.7 per cent, while Vietnam and Nepal's fell below five, a very large decline. (UN Women, Press Release: New IPU and UN Women map shows women's representation in politics stagnating.) Southern and East Asia's low women's participation is attributed to the concentration of women in traditional low-paid service jobs. (Hodgson, An., In Focus: Income Inequality between Men and Women to Worsen in Asia Pacific, Euromonitor International (2014), http://blog.euromonitor.com/2014/07/in-focusincome-inequality-between-men-and-women-to-worsen-in-asia-pacific.html.) It is suggested that some of the disparity is rooted in culture and tradition, and a product of legal differences between men and women, particularly those in South Asia. However, in Southeast Asia, the participation gaps have narrowed due to a small decline in male participation allowing women to take on more of the once male-occupied positions. (International Labour Office, Women at Work, Trends of 2016, pg. 6 (2016), http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_457317.pdf.)

Among the Arab States, 9.7 per cent of senior executive posts are held by women, an increase of 0.2 per cent from 2015. Tunisia's women's representation was at 23.1 per cent, an increase from 10.5 per cent in 2015 after two women joined the

government. United Arab Emirates' representation was 26.7 per cent. In this region, only these two countries hold percentages over 20. (UN Women, Press Release: New IPU and UN Women map shows women's representation in politics stagnating.)

In Oceania, women's representation increased in 2012. However, since then the Pacific region has seen stagnation in its numbers, remaining at 13 per cent since 2015. However, the Pacific region only includes 14 countries, because of this, any slight change in numbers could have a significant impact on the percentage of positions held by women.

d. Africa

Africa has seen a steady decline of women ministers; this trend has been fixed since 2015. (Id.) In 2017, women held 19.7 per cent of the region's ministerial power. This percentage was last surpassed in 2012. Though steady, it shows an increase in the five years that have passed. The top two countries in this region are Congo and Zambia, "adding four and six women ministers and reaching women's representation rates of 22.9 per cent and 33.3 per cent, respectively." (Id.) In 2018, the prime minister of Ethiopia has appointed women to more than half of the cabinet posts. This has created opportunities for radical reform of the African country. (The Guardian, Women win half of Ethiopia's cabinet roles in reshuffle), https://www.theguardian.com /world/2018/oct/16/women-win-half-of-ethiopias-cabinet-roles-in-reshuffle.)

III. Recommendations

The United Nations' goal of sustainable development cannot be achieved until there is equal participation and representation among women and men. Women's rights are human rights. Without women's participation, accurate representation of social issues will continue to fall short of fair and just. To ensure the increase of social protections of women through participation and representation, the Commission and the States of the world should encourage the implementation of policies supporting women's participation and representation. In that regard, Human Rights Advocates recommends:

1. Commission on the Status of Women urge countries to publicly acknowledge the lack of women participation and representation in positions of power and decision making.

2. State Governments to

a. Encourage the creation of social floor protections for women by establishing gender quotas in positions where decision-making largely affects females;

b. Encourage the creation of programs focused on getting women into decision-making positions. Programs should include high school and elementary programs which help encourage women into these fields and create successful pathways into the workforce beginning with early intervention;

c. Use incentives, for public companies to strive for increase of women participation and representation, including the use of tax breaks or grants for meeting certain gender quotas; and

d. Encourage the implementation of penalties for publicly-listed employers who do not make substantial moves to encourage women participation and representation through procedure changes and antidiscrimination policies.

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Statement submitted by Project 1948 Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

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Please recycle

Statement

On behalf of civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Project 1948 Foundation would like to express our deepest gratitude to United Nations Women for the opportunity to provide a written statement to the Commission for the Status of Women 2019.

At Project 1948 Foundation, we use our photo-voice program to identify, represent, and enhance gender equality and the empowerment of women. In partnership with Post-Conflict Research Center, our photo-voice program helps the global community see through a new lens, by telling the story of community concerns through media documentation while amplifying the voice of civil society and using innovative data as a platform for policy-change. Together, our work has unearthed a shared challenge which unites Bosnia and Herzegovina's tripartite state; only 65 per cent of citizens have access to clean and safe drinking water, the second lowest in Europe. Inefficient public water companies, informal housing constructed after the war and failure to secure necessary funding for vital works to develop dilapidated infrastructure have led to the current service failure. Although water is Bosnia and Herzegovina's most abundant natural resource, the water crisis is widespread across all scales of inhibition, affecting citizens settled in rural communities to the urbanized regions of Banja Luka and Sarajevo, alike. On behalf of Bosnia and Herzegovina's communities, we urge the member state of Bosnia and Herzegovina to fulfil the United Nations Fundamental Human Right of access to clean water and sanitation for all citizens, independent of gender identity, ethnic background or socioeconomic status.

Addressing said challenges through a truly sustainable development model in the water infrastructure sector has the opportunity to transform our global society through water exportation from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ultimately, our organizations believe focused energy of the government, private sector, and civil society is needed to fully eradicate this issue to engage in progress with fulfilment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 16 and 6, but also Goal 5. Inextricably linked, improvement of water provision will empower women and girls whose daily routines are disproportionately affected by the public services current failings, progressing Bosnia and Herzegovina's journey towards gender parity by 2030.

We must commit to not only invest in gender equality, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender inclusiveness, and the empowerment of women and girls, but we must understand how imperative it is to budget for the access to clean and safe drinking water. Although our organizations have founders from the United States, we have received no on-ground support from government entities including, the United States and Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, we need the public and private investment in order to improve water supply and sanitation and water resources management at the country-level cost. And, by our non-governmental organizations estimate, it is clear that meeting such investment challenges is reachable.

Clearly, we see obstacles framed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where our organizations conduct much of its work for the successful implementation of social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Currently, the country in which we work has placed as the very last member state to achieve the 2030 Agenda. We strongly urge the United Nations, government entities, civil society, and the private sector to move forward in joint efforts in helping Bosnia and Herzegovina achieve the 2030 Agenda with providing access to public services and sustainable

infrastructure in water governance with gender inclusiveness furthering the empowerment of every man, woman and child in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We would like the thank the United Nations for their continued support of our grassroots organizations and partnerships that have emerged through the Economic and Social Council with United Nations Volunteers, Smartly Consulting, Data Scientists Without Borders and the United Nations House of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Lastly, Project 1948 Foundation, Post-Conflict Research Center, and United Nations House of Bosnia and Herzegovina would like to reaffirm our commitment to collaboratively meet the Beijing Declaration on Platform for Action with change makers at all levels of government and with United Nations leaders around the globe.